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ABSTRACT

This Library of Congress selected bibliography highlights the efforts of Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, other German and German-American military leaders, and the Hessian auxiliary military forces in assisting the American colonies during the Revolutionary War. The booklet is divided into five parts. Part 1 provides historical information about the contributions of Baron von Steuben, Peter Muhlenberg, Johann DeKalb, Nicholas Herkimer, and the Hessian military forces, while parts 2-5 contain 143 bibliographic citations of materials that are included in the Library of Congress collections. These citations represent scholarly works, biographies, and fiction concerning these historical figures and the German-American contributions to the Revolutionary War cause. An author index, Library of Congress call numbers, and pictures of portraits are included. (JHP)

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A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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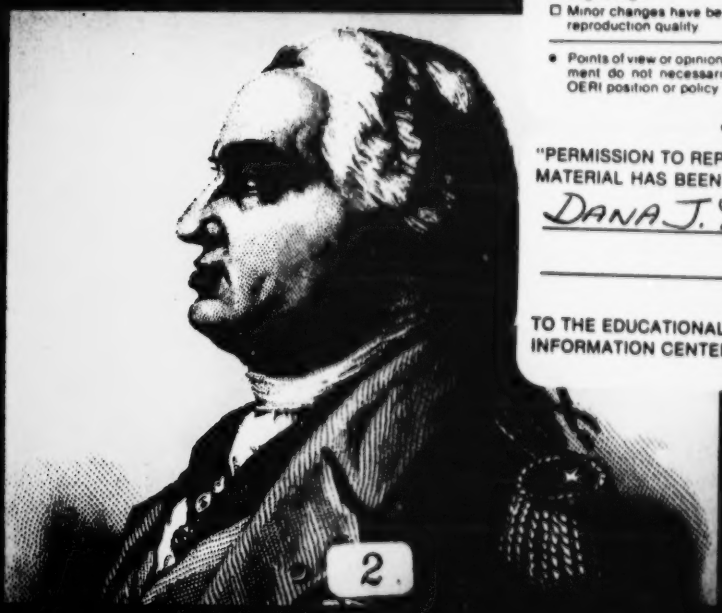

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INTRODUCTION

The Treaty of Paris of 1763 ended the French and Indian War. For the British colonies in North America, however, peace did not bring with it any lessening of the legal and fiscal control exercised by the Crown. Not only could the colonies still not determine their own taxes but their right to engage in certain forms of manufacture or to sell their products directly to non-British countries continued to be either forbidden or severely restricted. Aggravating the tension and discontent was the fact that segments of the colonial population had no ethnic ties with Great Britain (e.g., German settlers in Pennsylvania) or came from disaffected areas of the mother country like the Catholic Irish. For many, British administrators became "British masters" and even loyalists felt themselves distanced and changed by the conditions of a new and very different land.

George III and his political supporters clung to their ignorance of the situation and refused to heed the calls for concession and compromise. Instead they worsened matters to a pitch by a series of governmental acts hostile to the interests of the colonies. While some colonists continued to work for an improvement of British policy, a good many others rose up and challenged the government, attracting the attention and, in many cases, the open support of peoples in other lands. Among the latter, certain individuals provided direct assistance to the future new nation and their names have now come to form an honored part of the American record.

One of the most honored was Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben (1730–1794), who, despite major contributions, never attained the venerable stature enjoyed by the Marquis de Lafayette. Lafayette held higher rank during the conflict than did Steuben, but military historians have found that the baron's contribution to the American cause was, in the final analysis, broader and more valuable.

Born Friedrich Wilhelm August Heinrich Ferdinand von Steuben in Magdeburg, Prussia, in 1730, the baron—or Freiherr, a title that would not be awarded until later in his life—entered the Prussian Army at the age of sixteen. He achieved his highest rank in this institution, that of captain, in the course of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). During that war, von Steuben was for a time attached to the general staff. He thus had the opportunity to work directly for Frederick the Great, the preeminent military commander of his era, and to learn directly from him. Steuben would later apply Frederick's principles of organization, discipline, and training to the task of revitalizing George Washington's Continental Army.

The recruitment of Baron von Steuben to the American cause was primarily the work of Benjamin Franklin. While serving as an agent of the United States in France, Franklin was introduced to von Steuben by French contacts sympathetic to the American struggle against the British Crown. Franklin saw in von Steuben the hope of creating a more professional fighting force to take the field against King George III's experienced troops; to this end, he concocted a resumé for the Prussian officer which conferred on him the rank of "Lieutenant General in the King of Prussia's Service." This recommendation by Franklin would force von Steuben for the balance of his life to misrepresent his past. It would also mislead and confound historians for decades. Franklin also described von Steuben as possessed of tremendous "zeal for our cause." While this description, written in 1777, was at the time somewhat disingenuous, it eventually came to describe the baron's political inclinations quite accurately.

Von Steuben assumed the task of training Washington's forces at the lowest point of the American war effort. His regimen was instituted at Valley Forge, where Washington's battered and depleted army had set up winter quarters after demoralizing defeats at Brandywine and Germantown. The Prussian "Lieutenant General" was forced by circumstances to cram a year's worth of military training into two months. By serving personally as drill instructor, he soon earned the warm respect of the American troops, who proceeded from the bleak prospects of Valley Forge to victory at Trenton over mainly German, or "Hessian" forces. Now a trained and disciplined force, the Continentals went on to turn the tide of the war which had seemed lost in 1777.

On Washington's recommendation, the U.S. Congress appointed

von Steuben Inspector General of the Army with the rank of major general in 1778. He proved invaluable to the Commander as a staff officer for the remainder of the conflict. After much supplication by the Baron, General Washington appointed him to a field command prior to the battle of Yorktown, where his experience in siege operations proved valuable to the American forces.

General Washington recognized the importance of von Steuben's contribution to the war for independence. Upon his retirement as commander-in-chief, Washington wrote to his former Inspector General:

> Annapolis, 23d December, 1782.
>
> My Dear Baron.
>
> Although I have taken frequent opportunities, in public and in private, of acknowledging your great zeal, attention, and abilities in performing the duties of your office, yet I wish to make use of this last moment of my public life to signify, in the strongest terms, my entire approbation of your conduct, and to express my sense of the obligations the public is under to you for your faithful and meritorious services.
>
> I beg you will be convinced, my dear sir, that I should rejoice if it should ever be in my power to serve you more essentially than by expressions of regard and affection; but, in the mean time, I am persuaded you will not be displeased with this farewell token of my sincere friendship and esteem for you.
>
> This is the last letter I shall write while I continue in the service of my country. The hour of my resignation is fixed at twelve to-day, after which I shall become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac, where I shall be glad to embrace you, and testify the esteem and consideration with which
>
> I am, my dear Baron, etc.,
>
> George Washington

Perhaps the most influential of von Steuben's achievements was the *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, also known as the "Blue Book." Von Steuben's military guide book served as the training manual of the American Army well into the 19th century. His proposals for national defense although not adopted by Congress in his lifetime, foreshadowed the system eventually adopted in 1920.

Although he died a debtor in 1794, Baron von Steuben and his achievements did not go unrecognized by his adopted country. In 1790, he was granted by Congress a life pension of $2,500 per year. He had previously been the beneficiary of a 16,000-acre land grant from the state government of New York. It was on this estate near Utica that von Steuben died on November 28, 1794.

Another German-American contributor to the American war effort was Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg (1746–1807). Known as the "fighting parson," because he was a Lutheran minister, Muhlenberg commanded a Virginia regiment which saw action in North Carolina and was eventually incorporated into the Continental Army. He was promoted to brigadier general in 1777 and eventually came to command all Continental forces in Virginia. He distinguished himself at the battle of Yorktown, where one of his brigades served as the advance guard. Its capture of one of the British flank redoubts led to General Cornwallis's surrender.

General Johann DeKalb was born in Bayreuth, Germany, in 1721. An officer in a German infantry regiment of the French Army, he was dispatched to the English colonies to report on their military readiness for a conflict with the mother country. His report recommended French assistance to the colonists. Apparently inspired by the Americans, DeKalb volunteered to accompany the Marquis de Lafayette and his forces to aid the fledgling U.S. forces. He was killed at the battle of Camden, South Carolina, in 1780 after suffering multiple wounds in battle.

Brigadier General Nicholas Herkimer (1728–1777) was the grandson of an immigrant from the Palatinate. He commanded American troops in his native New York, most notably at the battle of Oriskany, where his forces relieved the embattled garrison at Fort Stanwix and foiled a British attempt to occupy the Hudson Valley. Like DeKalb, Herkimer also fell in battle, at Oriskany, in August 1777.

Not all German contributions during the course of the Revolution were undertaken on behalf of the colonies. The so-called "Hes-

sians" were forces from the principalities of Hesse-Cassel, Brunswick, Hesse-Hanau, Anspach-Bayreuth, Waldeck, and Anhalt-Zerbst. More than half of the troops were from Hesse-Cassel. The Hessian corps had its own Hessian commander who was to cooperate with the British corps commander. Though often referred to as mercenaries, these professional troops were lent to the British Crown by the princes of these small German states for financial considerations which were transferred directly into royal coffers, not the pockets of the troops in the field. The total number of Hessians thus employed by the British came to approximately 30,000, a considerable number when one considers that the British Army in America probably never exceeded 50,000 at any time.

The American colonies owed the success of their war for independence in large measure to military aid from European nations. Germans and German-Americans made a significant contribution to the American cause. Baron von Steuben of Prussia offered his scientific military expertise to mold thirteen ill-trained and discordant state contingents into a uniformly drilled national army. His reforms brought efficiency and economizing measures to the army. These skills he had learned from Frederick the Great. His personal willingness and ability to adapt the Prussian system to American conditions, however, contributed materially to the completeness of his success.

The list of selected reading materials which follows treats not only von Steuben but also DeKalb, Herkimer, Muhlenberg, and the Hessian Auxiliary Forces. A particularly useful work is *The papers of General Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, 1777–1794: guide and index to the microfilm edition* by Edith von Zemensky (see entry no. 57).

This bibliography consists of four sections, each of which is arranged alphabetically, although the entries are numbered consecutively in a single sequence throughout the volume. Items have been selected for inclusion on the basis of their value as broad treatments. Most of these publications, however, fall into one of several established categories. They range from works of critical scholarship to biography, and pertinent fiction and drama, since this bibliography is intended to have wide appeal and inspire broad interest in the German-American community. All items listed can be found in the collections of the Library of Congress. An index is included for easy access.

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fully acknowledged. Many thanks are also due Mrs. Helen Saunders for the careful preparation of the text.

Margrit B. Krewson
May 1987

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